

Sociology of Ethnicity and Racism

Lecture 2

2 March 2006

Today's topic

Basic concepts

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- *Descent and culture communities:*
- Ethny = *ethnie* (French) = ethnic group
- 'Race'
- Nation

- Ethnocentrism, xenophobia
- Racism
- Nationalism, chauvinism (jingoism)

Social groups & identities

- Basic assumptions:
- Individuals are members of different social groups
- Social groups are real and exist as a vital part of our social world, our daily lives, our social reality
- We identify with certain groups, but not with others

Social psychology

- ‘us’ & ‘them’
- ‘in-group’ & ‘out-group’
- stereotypes & prejudice

Studies of inter-group behaviour

- In-group (*our* group): a group one identifies with
- Out-group (*the other* group): a group one does not identify with
- A tendency to privilege ingroup members over outgroup members
- People are in search of a positive social identity, which they accomplish by making a positive distinction between their ingroup and other relevant groups.

Studies of inter-group behaviour

- Identification (personal and social identity)
- Social comparison
- Social categorisation

Stereotyping & prejudice

- Ordering chaos of the world & categorising
- Simplification
- Generalisation
- Exaggeration
- BUT ALSO
- The process of *pre-judging* somebody or something
- A value judgement made without any verification and without empirical base in reality
- Based on generalised and stereotypical images and judgements, simplified
- Very resilient to change

Descent

(ancestry, genealogy, lineage, origin)

- the principle of genealogical connection by which attachment to a particular ancestral group is attained
- key words: kinship, ancestors, blood, ‘own kind’, brothers and sisters, father and mother – ‘fatherland’, ‘Mother Russia’, ‘the children of Africa’...
- 3 English words with connotations of shared descent and culture: ethny, race, nation

1. Ethnic group or ethny (*ethnie*)

- from Greek *ethnos*: people, unity of people with common blood or descent
- *ethnikos*: referring to heathens, the ‘others’, foreign
- 15th century in English *ethnic* meant somebody not Hebrew not Christian, so a pagan -> not ‘us’ but ‘others’
- the term ‘ethnicity’ first appeared in English in the 1950s; it has various meanings: ethnic identity, the essence of ethny, belonging to ethny...

Ethnocentrism and xenophobia

- When neighbouring ethnic groups come into contact, ethnocentrism is much more common than racism
- Ethnocentrism is a general term for the belief that your own group's cultural traditions and values are correct and superior to all others. It is often coupled with dislike and even contempt for people who have other cultural traditions. Ethnocentrism is universal – all around the world people have these beliefs to some degree.
- Xenophobia is fear, dislike, contempt or hate towards the 'others', those different, the 'them' in opposition to 'us'

2. 'Race'

- Social construct; race exists as a social category
- Race: a group defined as distinct because of its supposed common physical characteristics
- It is people who make the classification and definition (historical and contextual role)

Racism

- Ideology of racial domination
- Based on beliefs that certain racial groups are (biologically or culturally) inferior
- Racism uses such beliefs to justify the way a given society treats certain groups (discrimination, segregation, etc.)
- Harmful prejudice, discrimination, and/or persecution based on presumed ethnic/racial differences

3. Nation

- Latin origin, *natio* from *nasci* to be born
- civic and ethnic definitions of nation
- Political or civic nation (*Staatsnation, nacija*) and cultural or ethnic nation (*Kulturnation, narod*)
- Civic nationhood derives from free will and participation in the nation; ethnic nationhood is tied to culture, ethnicity, and based on shared territory or language, or common descent etc.

Nationalism

- Political ideology and movement that seeks national sovereignty and independent statehood
- It puts the nation on a pedestal
- Modernity of nationalism – the rise of the modern ‘nation-state’

‘Bad’ nationalism

- Chauvinism
- Jingoism

Next week's reading list:

- From the “**Ethnicity**” Oxford reader (Hutchinson & Smith, 1996):
- R. Schermerhorn ‘Ethnicity and Minority Groups’
- Manning Nash ‘The Core Elements of Ethnicity’
- T. H. Eriksen ‘Ethnicity, Race, Class and Nation’ (also available in The Ethnicity Reader & <http://folk.uio.no/geirthe/Ethnicity.html>)
- Fredrik Barth ‘Ethnic groups and boundaries’
- From “**The Ethnicity Reader**” (Guibernau & Rex, 1997) read Anthony D. Smith ‘Structure and persistence of ethnies’
- From the “**Nationalism**” Oxford reader (Hutchinson & Smith, 1994):
- Clifford Geertz ‘Primordial and Civic Ties’
- From “**People, Nation and State**” (Mortimer & Fine, 1999) read Robin Cohen ‘The Making of Ethnicity...’